

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
8TH DISTRICT, MARYLAND

COMMITTEE ON
WAYS AND MEANS

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2009

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Mr. Neil J. Pedersen
Administrator
Maryland State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21202-3668

Dear Mr. Pedersen:

I am writing to urge you to include bicycle and pedestrian improvements as part of your plans for transportation infrastructure modifications for the BRAC relocation at the future Walter Reed Military Medical Center.

As you know, I have been a strong advocate of federal funding for transportation improvements to accommodate the additional traffic associated with the Base Closing and Realignment Commission's decision to consolidate the National Naval Medical Center and Walter Reed at the NNMC site in Bethesda. I was pleased to help obtain the \$3 million recently appropriated by Congress for intersection improvements, and I plan to request \$40 million for next year in support of related transportation work.

Providing bicyclists and pedestrians with safer and more convenient access to, from, and through the Walter Reed area will play an important role in minimizing the number of new automobile trips resulting from the BRAC consolidation. At a minimum, road improvements should refrain from interfering with existing bicycle and pedestrian access or making it more difficult for better bicycle and pedestrian facilities to be added in the future. The BRAC transportation changes should support multimodal access to encourage biking and walking as well as transit and automobile travel.

Members of the bike commuter club at the National Institutes of Health counted 600 cyclists passing the intersection of Cedar Lane and Rockville Pike during a single morning rush hour, and the club maintains an e-mail list with more than 1,000 members who have signed up to receive updates on bicycle access to the area around NIH. If attempts to improve automobile access come at the expense of bicyclists, then efforts to relieve traffic may actually increase the number of cars on the road as bicycle commuters turn to automobiles to get to work.

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Moreover, such efforts are required under §2-602 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, which states that, with respect to “any new transportation project or improvement to an existing transportation facility, the Department shall work to ensure that transportation options for pedestrians and bicycle riders will be enhanced and that pedestrian and bicycle access to transportation facilities will not be negatively impacted by the project or improvement.”

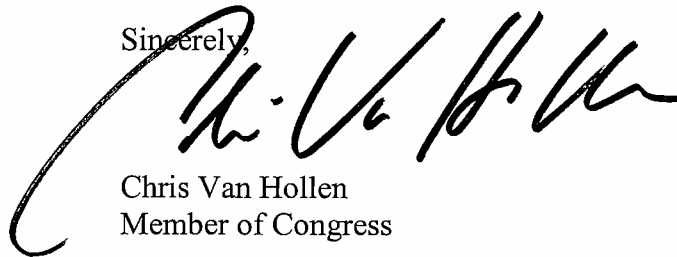
As such, I respectfully request that you consider how the plans you are proposing for the four intersections under consideration – Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane, Old Georgetown Road and Cedar Lane, Rockville Pike and Jones Bridge Road, and Jones Bridge Road and Connecticut Avenue – relate to the multiuse paths and bike lanes on or adjoining these roads contemplated by local Master Plan documents. For example, Montgomery County’s Master Plan calls for a multiuse path on Cedar Lane between Rockville Pike and Old Georgetown Road, a segment that overlaps with two of the intersections involved in the BRAC project. Moreover, the Bethesda Trolley Trail abuts the western side of Old Georgetown Road on the eastern edge of the National Institutes of Health property. This part of the Trail is no more than a sidewalk at present, and expanding the portion of the right-of-way used for automobile traffic could severely compromise any effort to widen the trail to an AASHTO-compliant width in the future (and might even eliminate the space now available for the Trail).

I would appreciate your reviewing this matter and advising me in writing of your findings. Please direct all correspondence to me at the following address:

51 Monroe Street, Suite 507
Rockville, MD 20850
FAX: (301) 424-5992

If you need additional information, please contact Michael Parsons in my Rockville office at (301) 424-3501. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Van Hollen", with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the bottom left.

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

CVH/mp